



## LITTLE WYOMING

# WYOMING RATTLESNAKES!

## RATTLESNAKES ARE GREAT MOTHERSsssss

When we imagine what a nurturing mother looks like, the first image that comes to our minds probably isn't that of a rattlesnake! But rattlesnakes, including Wyoming's prairie rattlesnake and midget faded rattlesnake, deserve three shakes of the tail for being great mothers.

## BORN LIVE

All rattlesnakes are ovoviviparous. This means that they don't lay eggs; rather, eggs develop and hatch within the mother's body, and the babies are born live. Rattlesnake clutch sizes depend on the size of the mom, with larger mothers having more babies per clutch. Prairie rattlesnakes can have clutches ranging in size from four to 20 babies, while the much smaller midget faded rattlesnake usually has only three or four babies in a clutch.

## A MOTHER'S SACRIFICE

Looking for food puts a mother rattlesnake at risk of getting eaten, so she may not eat at all while she's pregnant. By the time her babies are born, a mother rattlesnake may lose almost 50% of her body weight! She must spend the next year or two eating as much as she can to rebuild her fat reserves. Because pregnancy takes such a toll on mother rattlesnakes, she only has babies every two to three years.

## CUDDLE PUDDLE

Baby rattlesnakes are born in late summer near their hibernation dens. Rattlesnakes are born venomous and independent, but they still benefit from having their mother around. Baby rattlesnakes are less than 6 inches long when born. Because they are so small, they lose body heat very quickly. In order to stay warm enough to survive and grow, they must spend most of the day soaking in the sun's rays. Mother rattlesnakes are much bigger and retain heat for much longer, so her babies will huddle on her body to keep warm in the cool morning or evening hours!

